THE PHILOSOPHY OF REINCARNATION

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by

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"The Self and its Problems"

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF REINCARNATION

To arrive at the true inwardness of reincarnation —if such a consummation be possible at our present stage of knowledge—involves a more than cursory examination of the basal assumptions of Theosophy. We must go where only thought can take us, and study the direct arising of mankind in God ; for we can know nothing of the subject and centre of the reincarnating process, man, without a preliminary reference to the Superman whence he came forth. Let us then get firmly down on the bed-rock.

The One Reincarnating Centre

There is One Universal Monad for the system to which we belong, of Whom, and to Whom, and through Whom are all things and beings which form the content of that system. One Self, many manifestations ; one Monad, innumerable personæ, aspects, expressions—each outwelling, as it were, from the One Centre ; held in manifestation by the

One Will ; indrawn after a determined cycle, and retained as eternal elements of experience in the One Consciousness.

If we get back to ultimates, the One Reincarnating Centre in the Universe is the Logos of that Universe, and to understand the sense in which He reincarnates is to get a clearer conception of our own reincarnation ; for "as above, so below." It is, then, most important to inquire at the outset as to the way in which we may regard the Logos as the One Typical Reincarnating Centre of a world and a world-system. We will suggest the points very briefly at the outset, and will afterwards endeavour to develop them at length.

He does not Re-incarnate because He is Perpetually Incarnate

We have specially to note, in answer to the question how does the One Ego in the Universe reincarnate, that, although in a sense incarnate in all His manifestations, He cannot be said to *re*-incarnate in any one of them, as the term is strictly understood. His activity in the Universe is not that of a process of going and coming ; of alternation first in this form and then in that, as a man exchanges one suit of clothes for another at will. The sartorial illustration which we meet *ad nauseam* in Theosophic text-

books is useless as an illustration of the real method of reincarnation, even in its exoteric presentation ; for the truth seems to be that it is not the man who gets out of his clothes, but the clothes which fall off from the man. The main principle to be enunciated in this paper is that change, rebirth, metempsychosis, is always on the part of the form, rather than on the part of the life. The process is better described by the term " metensomatosis," or change of body, since process—an idea involving change—is the property of the form side of things, and may not with strictness be applied to the Monad, whether universal or individual. We speak of the Self as entering the area of Evolution, or Becoming, for the sake of a definite gain to himself in wisdom and experience. But this idea involves metaphysical difficulties, since nothing can be added to the Divine, nor can any multiplication of experience in the lower worlds make the Spirit *more* than it is in essential nature.

He Eternally Reproduces Himself in Forms

A more consistent view would be that the Self does not evolve, being essentially beyond Saṁsâra and the age-long march of experience in time. He enters that plane, and shares that experience, it is true, *not for what evolution can bring to Him, but*

because His essence is that He shall be self-reproductive. In other words, the fact that He *is*, implies that He shall reproduce Himself in and by means of form.

But if the idea of self-reproduction leads, in its turn, to metaphysical difficulties as to how from the One can come many ones, each co-equal and co-existent, we may perhaps more accurately employ the term self-expression. The activity of the Logos—and, by analogy, of the monad—is above all things a creative activity, and what can He create but His own self-expressions? Can He, indeed, think into existence any self-expression that is less in content than the Thinker? Is there lessness and moreness with God? There are, then, no manifestations of the One in which the Whole is not present for thought, though hidden under the illusory veil of the form-planes.

Forms are the Eternal Thought in Self-utterance

The old conception of self-utterance lightens the mystery somewhat. Self-utterance, however, is not strictly evolution, in the sense of increase, or moreness, either by development from within, or by addition from without. Just as a thought is not added to, or multiplied, by taking flesh in word, so the One remains in essence unchanged, whether

expressed or unexpressed. That He clothes Himself in utterance is but another way of affirming that one aspect of His nature is to be creatively active, and we may fill volumes without advancing one step beyond this fundamental affirmation. And as He is creatively active, ever prompted to self-expression, so the individual monad is creatively active, and from the same reason, or non-reason. Our philosophy stops here.

God, the changeless and all-perfect, acts through His forms or manifestations on the lower planes; and He is His manifestations only in the sense in which a man is his thought, yet, at the same time, anterior to and independent of it. So the passing of a form affects no whit the continuous play of the One Life upon a world from which He never for a moment withdraws. "When Thou takest away Thy breath they die," says the Psalmist, in forgetfulness of the fact that the breath is never taken away, though it may become indrawn. When that happens a form is said to perish. As a matter of fact, it is only removed to a deeper level of the Universe. *Shape* dissipates; *form* is indrawn; for it is as permanent as its antithesis, life. What takes place at so-called death is the removal of a manifestation from the spatial to the (relatively) non-spatial; but there is no cessation and recommencement of the

One Continuous Life. We cannot, therefore, strictly speak of the *reincarnation* of That which has never ceased, and will never cease to vitalise the worlds which are the offspring of Its Heart.

Do the Forms Re-incarnate?

Now look at the question from the point of view of the forms. May we say that the *manifestations* of the One, Continuous, Incarnating Centre reincarnate? We have to walk very warily here, for if reincarnation be true at all, it is only of the forms that it is true. And yet what do we mean by the reincarnation of a form? Do we affirm unchanged persistence, sameness, for each form that makes a periodic return to the external levels of the Universe? Is the soul, which is the "form" of the monad, a kind of jack-in-the-box, pressed down by the lid of matter, only to spring up when the lid is removed, and again to retire to his box on the further closing of the lid—the same jack, the same box, at the mercy of the closer, and his pleasure in the closing? Or is it on reincarnation the same jack in a new box?

Whatever the facts of the matter may be, I greatly doubt if we can find in Nature an analogy of the principle we seek. The forms that perished yesterday do not return to-day. Nature is too

exuberantly creative to repeat her experiences, or reduplicate her material. She is new from moment to moment. Even myself of last night is not the precise expression of the self of the present moment. I die daily, nay momentarily, and my death is a passing on, never to return. Wise, truly, is the Buddhist Scripture that says :

" Just as a chariot-wheel in rolling, rolls only at one point of the tire, and in resting, rests only at one point ; in exactly the same way the life of a living being lasts only for the period of one thought. As it has been said :

" ' The being of a past moment of thought has lived, but does not live, nor will it live.

" ' The being of a future moment of thought will live, but has not lived, nor does it live.

" The being of the present moment of thought does live, but has not lived, nor will it live.' "

Forms are Temporary

Forms, indeed, can no more be said to reincarnate, in the strict sense of the word, than can the life of which they are the expression. Although both form and life are in essence indestructible, it does not follow that there is one and the same form for a series of reincarnations. In the latter part of our study we shall endeavour to distinguish that element

of form which is permanent and continuous, the subtle nucleus of a cycle of forms, from the elements which are seemingly transitory because they undergo transformation.

Perhaps the most baffling of Nature's paradoxes is that of the imperishable in the fleeting, the eternal in the temporal. The mind seeks to hold the fleeting during a momentary analysis, and behold, it is gone ; there is, indeed, no mental certainty that it ever has been. It seeks, on the other hand, a principle of permanence, to find that it can know the permanent only through the fleeting, the thing that is through that which is not. Then, changing the mental standpoint, the results of the search become changed. The fleeting is seen to have within it that which preserves an imperishable identity throughout an innumerable series of transformations. Strictly, the fleeting is not, and the permanent alone is. We cannot put our finger upon a single element in nature which is fleeting *per se ;* each element in a form is in itself an imperishable Cosmos of order and stability, possessing a distinguishing self-hood which is its own to the end of the chapter. Such is our great dilemma. We think to find and capture the fleeting, and behold it is found to be the permanent ; we grasp the permanent only to discover a further and wider exemplification of the fleeting.

Such are some of the initial difficulties which beset the searcher into the true inwardness of reincarnation—difficulties which demand for their conquest a mind of no ordinary subtlety, and of unclouded clearness of perception.

One thing, however, must be borne in mind, that where there is manifestation there is relativity. No element within the zone of the Manifest is permanent or impermanent, *per se*, but is only so in relation to the plane either above or below the order of manifestation to which it belongs. But for practical purposes, and from the standpoint of the widest limit of the Relative our thought can reach, let us fix our stable, permanent centre in the Monad, universal or particular. Let it represent for us the highest element of permanence of which we can conceive. Let everything that falls within the range of its specific manifestations be regarded as the fleeting, in the sense of becoming subject to transmutation, growth, development, or some other form of change. We shall then have a definite principle on which to proceed.

The Monad and His Experience are Permanent and Continuous

Now the shining of the One Self is, as I have emphasised, a continuous activity on all the planes at

once. It is not a process of alternate going in and coming out. So, too, with the Self in man. He is practically identical with the One Self; and the memory which links his passing states into coherent unity is the storehouse of that Self's experience. These elements—the Self and His experience—do not come and go; they always are, they always will be. They animate forms, now on this plane, now on that, and remain unchanged throughout all the bodies' changing. The breaking up of a form affects them not, save to increase the perfection of their self-expression by the addition of that form's experience. The full volume of the Self is ever seeking expression through the ceaseless flux of momentary states or personæ, like a spring whose source is one and unchanged, but whose waters are new from moment to moment. If, then, the "me" perishes in regard to its present state with every moment that gives it birth, I grieve not; my passage through time is the making room for a fuller upwelling of the continuous Self, Who never repeats His aspects because each is multiplied from Himself eternally.

What, then, Reincarnates?

If then the Self does not reincarnate because it is continuous, and if its manifestations do not rein-

carnate because they belong to the ever-onward, never-returning stream of time, what is the philosophic basis of our belief? To answer this satisfactorily a little careful thinking is necessary on lines at first sight somewhat foreign to the subject under consideration. To sketch, even roughly, the noble conception of metensomatosis, some attention must be given to the nature of the human Monad, for he is the root and centre of the whole idea. And it is more convenient for the present line of treatment to view the Monad as one, without distinction between manifest and unmanifest. Our enquiry will be two-fold :

i. What the Monad is.

ii. The method by which he becomes what he is.

The Human Monad is an Objectification of the Universal Monad

(i.) To answer the question, what is the Monad, we must go back again to our bed-rock. The Universal Monad, we are told, is a Trinity of Will, Wisdom, and Activity ; and when Will passes into willing, Activity into action, Wisdom into conscious knowing, the mystery arises which we call the outbirth of the Monads. Let us endeavour to think of the matter without recourse to materialistic symbols,

which cannot go far towards the representation of what must be in essence a mental and spiritual process. We will think of the Universal Monad as getting His object-world, without which He could not be a Self, a Knower, by the pure expression of His essential being. He wills; He knows; He acts. To use the language of psychology, the "I" objectivises itself in the "Me."

Humanity is the objective case of the great Substantive of the Universe, His thought of Himself as Other, the outer expression of all that is implied in His being a Self, a Centre of Will and Consciousness. By will and thought, and the energy acting in and sustaining that which is willed and thought, the Universe is projected upon the screen of time and space. We cannot form the most glimmering conception of this transcendent mystery save by taking the always dangerous course of arguing from the particular to the universal. Let us descend for the moment to the concrete and watch a faint reflection of the mystic process within our own consciousness.

As Our "Me" is the Objectification of our "I"

We know that our total experience as entities capable of awareness is duplex; *i.e.*, the Self—the

name given to the sum-total of conscious experience —is partly knower and partly known, partly subject and partly object, having within it two clearly discriminated aspects which are sometimes called the " I " or pure Ego, and the " me " or empirical Ego. The most common pronouncement of consciousness is that these two are identical ; that to be a Self, a unit of will, thought, and activity, is to be possessed of these two aspects in more or less equal degree.

" In the widest possible sense," says Professor James, " a man's ' me ' is the sum-total of all that he can call his." [1] His material, social, and spiritual " me's " carry him, in a sort of hierarchical ladder, from the lowest bodily, to the innermost ultimate rung of the conscious states with which he unceasingly identifies himself. These conscious states follow each other in unbroken continuity, and each appropriates, by memory, the same past " me " ; but the human knower can know only a few at a time. Yet unless he knows himself in his states, his " me's," he knows himself not at all, for the knower, to be a knower, must have something to know. The " I," or pure Ego, is that which at any given moment is conscious ; the " me " is one of the things of which it is conscious.

[1] Text Book of Psychology (Abb. Edition), p. 177.

The Human Monad is Produced from the Universal by Entsagung or the Law of Limit

Now in thinking of the human Monad, and the Universe of which he forms a part, we are thinking of the "me's," or conscious states of the Universal Knower. The Universe is the limiting area which the Logos lays down, or marks out for his own self-expression. Universal Consciousness can become Universal *Self*-Consciousness only by this preliminary focussing of Consciousness into a specific area. Similarly the innumerable Centres in the Being of the Supreme lay aside for a time their glory, that they may gain definite self-expression within a prescribed field of manifestation. Their method is what Goethe would term, as applied to morals, *Entsagung*—Renunciation, the acceptance of a limit for purposes of ultimately wider self-realisation. I speak under difficulties, having to employ terms of time in relation to that which comprises at once both time and timelessness; the Logos from His own standpoint being out of what to us is successiveness, and yet sharing the time-state which His own will has imposed. If our intuition can rise to the conception of a state in which the sum total of time-changes are comprised in *one moment of unity*, we may keep our heads above water.

Man, too, follows the same Method in Self-consciousness

Now, this mystic *Entsagung* of the Universal Monad may be faintly reflected on the concrete plane in the methods by which the human "I" knows itself in the "me." These methods are inhibitory; *i.e.*, out of a possible object-world of indefinite extent we focus attention on a limited section only. We throw out, neglect, the greater bulk of vibrations that impinge upon us in all directions, for the sake of a clear representation in consciousness of some of the facts that are existing, and existing only for consciousness, and which cannot so exist, save as they are recognised in succession. The secret of self-consciousness is that its content shall be brought at every conscious moment to a definite focus; and though, of course, the width of the focus will be coincident with the extent of the consciousness, yet in all conditions involving a "self," the principle of convergence to a centre is present to a greater or smaller degree.

The Universe is the Self-limitation of God by Entsagung

The focus of the consciousness of that aspect of the Logos to which we are related is the solar system, the full content of which is comprised by

Him in one act of attention. He cognises that by means of voluntarily inhibiting the vibrations of the myriad other worlds which are conceivably open to His gaze, did He will to concern Himself therewith. But the inhibition, or concentration upon a specific area within the indefinite possibilities of knowledge is the method which gives birth to the outer Universe. When *Entsagung*—a most profound conception—comes into play, there is outwardness, there is differentiation, there is the seeming forthcoming into matter of the multiplex object-world—the great "me" of the Universal "I." But the idea can only be dimly sensed; words dwarf it. It is the Passion of God, the Calvary of Creation, the laying down of the Divine Life, not only to endow a Universe with being, but also that God may have clear self-expression. This principle of inhibition involves, of necessity, an approach to the time-element, but the Logos in Creation is stooping to the time-element; it is part of the great *Entsagung*.

We have now a fair working idea of the nature of the Monad and of the rationale of his outbirth from God. He is, as we have said, the Logos thinking Himself, or an aspect of Himself, into objective manifestation on or by means of what we call the planes of the Universe. As the contents of the human mind are a unity in multiplicity, making in

their sum-total the expression of that mind itself, so the Monads composing the human race are the content of one mind, seemingly differentiated by the imposition of the principle of limit. That principle which gave them birth as objective expressions of the One, gave them also the sense of seeming separateness. A limit implies a "this" and a "that"; a "this" that is not "that," a "that" which is not some other. Differentiation is therefore a necessity of *Entsagung*, but it involves no destruction of the ultimate unity.

How the Human Monad becomes what he is

(ii.) Our second point brings us a step nearer the true inwardness of reincarnation, and proceeds in logical sequence from the first. Following on a statement of the nature of the Monad, comes a consideration of the method by which he *becomes* what he *is*.

Now the "me" of the Universal "I" becomes in its turn the "I" of a particular series of "me's," because, "as above, so below." Let us keep firmly before us the axiom with which we started, *viz.*, that as the Logos works in His manifestations as a whole, so the individual Monad works in the series of manifestations by which he obtains individual self-realisation. The principle of *Entsagung*, or

limit, is also the method of the Monad throughout his entire life-cycle. He too acts through his manifestations, his "me's," as the Logos acts through him.

Now, as we all know, the whole mystery of reincarnation hinges, not upon the Monad, for he does not reincarnate, but upon his manifestations, and the fruitage they bring to their parent source. The point of this article is that the *fruitage alone, stored in an appropriate vehicle, is the reincarnating principle in man.* But before we come to the discussion of this somewhat subtle point, it is imperative to watch carefully the Monad getting his manifestations, his "me's" or object-side. We shall have to discover their relation to himself, whether a relation of identity, or what not. But principally we must examine the part Reflection has to play in the whole microcosmic scheme.

The Law of Reflection

The Monad is the one centre of the human cycle, continuously active during the entire lengtn of the life of a universe. He is essentially out of time and space, and is, in his true being, the perfect reflection of the Logos by Whom he was thought-generated. That thought became an *eikon* or image of the Divine Thinker, and the starting-point of further images in

a self-reproductive series, which, as far as I can see, can have no limit, save in the close of a world-cycle. For each image has its fruitage ; it is in itself a miniature monad to the image to be born from itself, until the thinking, willing, knowing activity of the monad is quieted in the unknown rest of the Great Withdrawal.

Professor Royce once illustrated this, or a similar point, by a quaint illustration. There is, he says, an advertisement of a patent medicine consisting of a man holding in his hand a bottle of that medicine, on which is a label containing a duplication of the same figure—the man with the bottle, the bottle with the label. That second label will of course contain the man with the bottle, the bottle with the label in a series of self-reproductive pictures which literally can have no end for thought, though of course they would quickly have an end for space and matter. No human eye could detect their endless reduplication, but for thought they would, they must be present.

How the Monad Produces His Personalities

The illustration is grotesque, but it may serve as a faint analogy of the manner in which the Original *Eikon* produces, or reproduces, its age-long series of *eikones* of all ranks and degrees, in each of which he

is compelled by the laws of *Entsagung* to become self-limited. Speaking for the moment from the point of view *of the Monad on his own plane*, these images will be the *simultaneous* product of his continuous activity on all the planes of the Universe. The images on the labels do not appear in succession, but are generated with the generation of the original picture. This is of course from the standpoint of the original man with the bottle. To an observer whose limited eyesight demanded a slow deciphering of the images one by one, they might appear to arise in succession—an illusion which the conclusions of thought would at once dispel.

But our analogy must not of course be pressed too far. We have used it mainly to show the relationship between the Original *Eikon*, or Monad, and the personalities, or *eikones*, in which he is successively, yet simultaneously, mirrored, the mirrors of a lower rank being ultimately exchanged for those of a higher. St. Paul expresses the teaching in a phrase. "As we have borne the *eikon* or image of the earthy"—that is, the astral *eikon* made of the "dust" of Eden—"so shall we bear the *eikon* of the heavenly." Here the term "bear" seems also to suggest that the limitations of the image are imposed upon the Monad who has reflected himself therein; in other words, that the process has two elements,—

the action of the Monad on the image, and the reflex action of the image upon the Monad—a somewhat important point. Is the relationship one of identity? Identity in the sense in which a man is identical with his mind, and the mind with its content, but an identity which must yet allow for the notion of transcendence, for, as in the relationship between the Logos and His *Eikon*, the "Father is greater than I"; the Monad is Lord even of his highest expressions.

But in case our imagery may be taken for statement of literal fact—and there are minds who appear incapable of appreciating either the dangers or the uses of a figure—let us put this great principle of reflection in another way. In what other terms may we express the reflection of the *Eikon* in the *eikones?* What is a reflection? Mrs. Besant's definition can hardly be improved upon.

"Speaking generally, the term reflection is used when a force manifested on a higher plane shows itself again on a lower plane, and is conditioned by a grosser kind of matter in that lower manifestation, so that some of the effective energy of the force is lost, and it shows itself in a feebler form." (*Study in Consciousness*, p. 60.)

This statement appears to lend some support to a theory of value to myself, *viz.*, that the activity of

the personality on the lower planes is but the echo —so to speak—of the activity of the Monad in his own realm. He, the thinking, willing, knowing, acting centre of consciousness whose home and birth-place is the plane we vaguely term Divine, sets up, by reason of the exercise of his essential attributes, corresponding centres of activity on the planes below him (if I may be pardoned for the use of a misleading preposition)—centres which, though weakened in force by their transmission through denser matter, are yet of sufficient intensity to constitute independent units of consciousness, functioning through independent vehicles of matter.

The Images are the Activities of the Monad in Matter

Thus the activity of the Monad on his own plane is the initial impulse of a long series of simultaneous activities on the lower levels of the Universe, there being no plane on which the Monad is not consciously functioning through his intermediary *Eikones* or images, although his vehicles may be incapable of an interchange of experience with their fellows below and above. In other words, while the Monad has the free range of all the planes, he cannot inform his physical brain of what he is doing on the upper reaches of the Universe, for the reason

that at present the unification of the higher with the lower centres has not yet taken place. The centres are available for his own use, but they are not yet attuned the one to the other, so that between each plane there is literally a great gulf fixed—a gulf which the progress of evolution of the respective sheaths is rapidly bridging over. This theory removes the difficulty of gaps in the consciousness of the Monad by providing for his simultaneous consciousness on all the planes, instead of showing him to be awake on the highest and lowest, and more or less asleep on the planes that intervene.

We are now ready to take a second logical step nearer our conclusion. These manifestations of the One Eikon are the Monad expressing himself in time, space, and matter. Now comes the great question, What is Matter?—for which we have prepared ourselves by allusion to the law under which Matter arises—the law of *Entsagung*—the law of Limit.

But what is Matter?

Futile indeed is any attempt to understand reincarnation without having carefully thought out the philosophy of this mighty abstraction; but I should be foolhardy indeed were I to attempt to do more than offer a few broken reflections as to the

line on which perhaps this mystery may be profitably studied. To me, Matter is the first and highest expression of the law of Limit. The primal limitations of the Logos—Time, Space, and Matter—are three, as His hypostases are three ; we may term them the hypostases of His object-side. They arise, as I have said, when He, the Knower, the Willer, the Actor, knows, wills, and acts. And they arise as the result of His thinking Himself as this, and not that. In other words, He defines His Consciousness by these limitations. The widest limitation of Consciousness is the abstraction we term Matter.

Now, a moment's reflection will show that a certain " drawing apart " is required before the content of the mind of the Logos can exist as a separate " this " and " that." Differentiation demands and implies a limiting-wall between the objects differentiated, which shall not only draw apart, but also keep apart. We appear to have three distinct stages in the beginnings of the world-process ; in the first there is Thought ; in the second, the separation of Thought into Things (*thinks*) ; in the third, the preservation of the differentiated " thinks " by the barrier-wall of Matter. If we look at the problem carefully, however, we shall discover that this three-fold process is, in reality, one ; there being no thought without

" thinks," and no " thinks " without a keeping-apart. Matter, then, is practically identical with Differentiation.

The Inseverability of Matter, Form and Body

Co-existent with matter, the primal Limitation, are two further limitations, progressively concrete. These are Form and Body. Body is the concrete representation of Form ; Form is the activity of the Monad brought to a definite and specific expression. The triad Matter, Form, and Body represent progressive degrees of *Entsagung*, and constitute a trinity in unity which may not be severed for thought. When one arises, all arise. And as each member of the triad is the result of the activity of the Universal Monad working under the law of Limit, it follows that the popular dichotomy of soul and body, spirit and matter, is as philosophically absurd as it is necessary and convenient. If we must differentiate between the Self and the body in ordinary parlance, let us not carry this error into the realm of thought. The popular idea of a vehicle or sheath in which the Self alternately comes and goes, as a man gets in or out of his coat, is useful up to a point, but it must not be pushed too far. For the Self is not " inside " anything, though it cannot exist as a self without the limiting-wall

which promotes and protects its growing individuality. Neither may we think of it as being *enclosed by* the wall, as a fluid within a jar, or a flame within a lamp ; it is both flame and lamp, fluid and jar in mutual and age-long association, there having never been a moment in its æonian existence when it did not wear its appropriate body, the body which shall be its own till the limitations necessary to all modes of manifestation have passed away. When, therefore, we sometimes speak as though the self were precipitated into a body at human birth, we are misrepresenting the truth that, in coming into physical existence, the self has merely added a concrete and phenomenal representaton of its one original spiritual body, its primal self-utterance under the law of Limit. The great fact is that the human self, which is one of the limit-modes of the universal Self, is never without body as twin-aspect, since it is under the working of the same identical law that self and body arise, the latter constituting the bounds of life, the former the life within the bounds.

Now how do we usually think of Matter ? As a sea of some sort of rarefied gas in which the universe swims ? Or as an indefinitely extended ocean of infinitesimal granules called atoms which, when clustering thickly enough, become solid, and knock

us down? These may be among the *appearances* of matter, and probably from the point of view of one who studies matter along the lines of the sense-perceptions, are correct enough. A sense-impression is true—*as a sense-impression; i.e.*, when we affirm that matter can be heard, felt, seen, touched and tasted, we are referring to certain very real elements in our experience which have been experienced in the way we describe—as touchings, tastings, feelings, hearings, seeings. More than this no one may with safety affirm. A table is a solid aspect of something that is not-me, or so I think,—but this vaunted solidity is after all but a sensing. It is certainly true that I do not voluntarily create the sensing, for one of the mysteries of matter is that it is something one comes upon, if I may so speak, and discovers—something which initiates from without the sensing that arises from within. *I* do not initiate the phenomenon of matter, though the phenomenon exists for me, and on account of me; it is so closely allied to me that its vibrations are instantly converted into a modification of my own consciousness—a mystery of mysteries. What, then, can be the nature of this something which I certainly do not create, but which I discover, and having discovered transmute into my own essential being—without which, indeed, I could have no being at all in any intelligible sense of the word?

The Original Atom and Original Plane

As a matter of fact we cannot think matter save as a modification of the One Consciousness under self-imposed limits. Very briefly let us work out the conception from foregoing principles, for if we can think matter, we can think matter that reincarnates.

Let us, with the Hindus, start the evolution of matter from an original Atom—that Anu [1] which is a synonym for Brahmâ Himself. Brahmâ-Anu is the Universal Monad under His twin aspects of Life and Form. From Anu the ultimate Atom, which may be equally the smallest of the small as the largest of the large (for it is non-spatial), proceed the innumerable categories which determine the material universe : one Atom, the mighty seed of all matter and all planes ; one Atom, the potential reservoir of all vibrations, or vibrational tendencies ; the great Eikon of the universe on its Form side ; the mysterious innermost centre, the Âdi [2] plane, of which the succeeding planes are manifestations. For there is strictly but one Plane of Matter, as there is but one Centre of Consciousness in the universe, all others being modifications of the One,

[1] Sanscrit for "Atom."

[2] First or primeval.

the overtones of its fundamental note. Planes are merely degrees of otherness and outerness imposed by the Universal Monad for purposes of manifestation, and are not to be regarded in an absolute sense, still less as possessing reality apart from the consciousness of which they are a modification. The "reality" of a plane is entirely a question of stand-point, the "outermost" matter of a higher plane becoming the "innermost" of the plane below.

But of what substance is Anu, the fundamental Atom-Monad of Nature? The tendency of modern science is to the conclusion that the ultimate of matter is not a substance but a thrill. And what if that thrill be the thrill of thought? What if thought itself be the modification of a consciousness higher than thought? Suppose we define an atom as a unit of will limiting itself voluntarily within a definite ratio—its Tanmâtra. Let Anu be the Logos binding Himself under *Entsagung*. He who is all things marks out His All-consciousness into areas of special differentiation; these differentiations caused by Limit we call the "matter" of the kingdom or plane, and we become acquainted with the life-processes only at the point at which they cease to reveal themselves more fully along a given line.

The Permanent Atom

Now apply this principle to the individual Monad. He, too, is Brahmâ-Anu,[1] tuned to the measure of the greater Universe, and he repeats or follows the limits imposed upon his nature by the Universal Monad. He thinks forms, *i.e.*, he focusses his activities within definite limits. And he will have one Anu, one permanent, essential centre for each of the forms in which he seeks expression. This ultimate atom is the immediate reflection of the Monadic life on each of the planes of matter. Hence its permanence. It will be atomic—not in the sense of being minute, for it is non-spatial as we regard space, but in the sense of being simple, homogeneous, pure, unmixed with elements that are derivative and complex. But above all it will be one of the Self's most immediate modes ; it will be the Monadic Consciousness thinking itself under a limit, and entering into the limit it has thought.

Although we cannot impose upon it *our* conception of form and substance, none the less, however, it is the root of our form, the essence of our matter. We will remind ourselves of our great central principle—the welling outward of manifestations of life from one interior centre ; the appear-

[1] A title of Brahmâ who is conceived both as an atom and as the Infinite Universe.

ance of *personæ* from the One Self, of planes from the One Plane, of atoms from the One Atom. The work of the permanent atom on each plane is to do what the One Centre does everywhere—to serve as a nucleus of ever-changing form.

The Original Permanent Atom Reproduces Itself on the Successive Planes of Nature

Thus there is strictly but one permanent atom for the series of forms in which the Monad seeks reflection. That atom is the real organ of the Monad on his own plane, and gives rise by reflection to the permanent atoms of the succeeding planes by methods analogous to those previously discussed in reference to the manifestation of the *Eikon* in his *eikones*. In speaking of planes we are postulating a five-fold Universe. The Monad thrills outwards into a world whose aspects are, broadly, spiritual, mental, and psychic ; the spiritual (Atma) and the psychic (Astral) having each its form-aspects (Buddhi and Physical) ; while the mental level is an intermediary whose extremes touch the planes above and below. On each of these levels the Monad has the nucleus of a form, a point of contact at which his life and the life of the plane can mutually act and react. Though, as just said, the atom is strictly one, yet it has its correspondences on

all the great levels of the Universe. The activity of the Monad gives it being, and is the starting-point of the whole process of what we call " incarnation " on the five-fold levels of matter. In this it shows forth different characteristics—the continuous life and the changing form.

The Permanent Atoms are the Storehouse of Experience

But, as Kant says, it is only the permanent that changes ; *i.e.*, it is from the recognition of the permanent that arises the apprehension of change. And in Form there is a principle of permanence, a stable centre, if we may so speak, around which the fleeting and discrete elements in a series of forms are brought into systematic relation. In other words, the forms that change are unified by the permanent fruitage which is the product of their infinite diversity. This fruitage, which is but another name for the total experience of life on all the planes, has its storehouse in the stable centre of which I have spoken, and the experience being permanent, the storehouse also is permanent. If we can grip this conception philosophically, *without materialising it*, we shall fringe the secret of a great many mysteries. We shall discover, among other truths, that, while forms are transitory, Form is, and must be, eternal,—

in other words, that an indefinite series of destructions and renewals of forms will have one underlying unity which is the same throughout the whole cycle of manifestation—a unity which will not only be the root-atom of the incalculable millions that ceaselessly disperse and regather about the human centre, but also the Root-form of the entire series in which the monad seeks a transient self-expression.

The Eternal Cell

Now the theory of the permanent atom is something more than an assumption ; on the physical plane it has become a clearly recognised fact. Says Professor A. J. Thomson : " More clearly than even a dozen years ago scientists now recognise that the germ cells, and especially their nuclei, form the material basis of inheritance ; that there is genetic continuity between the germ-cells of the parents and those of their offspring." Weissmann, Hertwig, Strasburger, Kolliker, have argued from the importance of the nucleus in metabolism, in fertilisation, in maturation, and in cleavage, that the centre of the vital processes in the embryo is practically immortal, proceeding directly from the ancestral germinal cell passed from father to son through long generations. The germ-plasm, developing by means of a process of successive assimilations, is the store-

house of the accumulated tendencies of an ancestral line since the formation of the first member of the species.

What are we to think as to its ultimate constitution? This mighty speck which holds the secrets of a future race, is it material? In what conceivable fashion may character, tendency, mental idiosyncrasy, imagination, love, reside in a point of albumen? We cannot even dimly understand the way in which it contains the shape of a family nose, or that most subtle of inherited features, a tone of voice. "We confess," continues Professor Thomson, "our inability to solve the old problem: How are the specific characters potentially contained in the germ-cells, and by what mechanism do they attain expression in development?"

The Germ-plasm is the Permanent Atom in its Physical Aspects

Occultism has perhaps a clue to the mystery. It suggests that we regard this plasm as the Monad of Form expressing itself on the physical plane under the characteristics peculiar to that plane. Philosophically, we may not, I think, distinguish between the monad and the permanent atoms, save in the sense in which we distinguish aspects in the monad himself. He, the continuous, the permanent, with

the whole range of a five-fold universe in which to manifest, does so through temporary forms built about imperishable centres. It is obvious that on each plane he will have a specialised centre, temporary in character though built around a permanent core. This core will be the one permanent form for the whole cycle, the Anu, or ultimate atom, expressing itself on all the planes as the permanent atoms of those planes. In other words, the germ-plasm, or physical permanent atom, is the direct reflection, or expression in a coarser type of matter, of the spiritual permanent atom, the Monad on his object-side, so that impressions made upon the plasm are impressions garnered for the Monad, *never to be lost.*

It is not, therefore, difficult to see that the permanent atoms, even of the lower vehicles, are not lost at death, but await, in the Causal Reservoir,[1] the rhythmic call of the Monad to unfold their stored tendencies on the respective planes by means of the development of new bodies around the old centres. And the rationale of this may be summed up in a sentence, *viz.*, that *tendencies of whatever kind automatically seek to express themselves on the planes to which they are allied.*

So each new series of links or bodies provided for

[1] The vehicle of the Ego on the Higher Mental plane.

the Monad by his permanent atoms are strictly the expression of his fruitage in outward form. There is a very real sense in which the Monad is his body, for the connection between them is as close as that between thought and word. Body is consciousness turned outward, the powers of consciousness acting under the space limit. Bodies are merely degrees of outerness imposed by the self on its own manifestations. There is never, indeed, a moment in the whole life-cycle when it is not so functioning, *i.e.*, expressing itself in outerness of one or other degree. Body and self, as Lord Haldane emphasised in his admirable "Pathway to Reality," are not to be distinguished as two essentially independent entities; they are related as higher and lower. Therefore, we may not philosophically speak of the self as being in or out of its body; it is not in or out of anything, being essentially apart from time and space, but when in touch with its outward expressions it shares, and at the early stages is compelled to share, the time and space sensation.

Experience seems at first sight to contradict this assertion. But it is not really so. If I seem to leave this body in trance, and function in the "astral," have I made a distinct remove from one body to the other? No; I have functioned in my astral body throughout; I function in all the bodies of

which I may be possessed at all moments, but for some reason I may temporarily cease my connection with the outermost, and so transfer that portion of my consciousness that is physical to that portion of my consciousness which is astral or mental. At death, and in the post-mortem states, this is just what happens. My bodies fall away in succession, in obedience to their own laws, and to the vibratory limit of their permanent atoms; and with their dissolution my touch is temporarily lost with the particular plane they represent, unless I make another body at will for special manifestation on any given plane—a task requiring no little training, and a considerable degree of occult development.

But is my activity for a single moment interrupted? Do I change with the changing of my vehicles? Am I "here" now, and "there" tomorrow; have I, as monad, anything to do with hereness and thereness, save as limits imposed by the exigencies of body? I am here and there only as I focus consciousness outward. With the gradual retreating of consciousness into the more interior vehicles the standpoint and nature of experience become altered, what was formerly limited by a sense of *locality* tending now towards an ever-increasing sense of *universality*.

The True Metensomatosis.

Consciousness is, of course, dependent upon bodies during its cycle of manifestation, and bodies it will always have of one or other degree of materiality ; *its ceaseless activity is the guarantee of the ceaseless re-creation of its forms.* But the true " metensomatosis " implies that it is not I, the eternal, timeless, and uncreate, who reincarnates, passing from body to body, from plane to plane. The process consists, rather, in the arising of new appearances under the play of the permanent atom. The only way, as it seems to me, in which we can speak of the reincarnation of the Monad is that he will temporarily and periodically associate himself with a new manifestation of certain stored vibrational tendencies which represent the garnering of his life, and for which the permanent atoms appear, in a way wholly mysterious, to provide the necessary material basis.

The Function of the Permanent Atom

We reach now our last, and perhaps most important, consideration, *viz.*, the function of the permanent atom as a collector of the fruitage of lives. It exists in the body as a conscious centre which has been slowly specialised for the storing and combining of the countless vibrations which correspond to

human experience. This experience is not only that of the owner of the body, but of his ancestors in a direct line of succession, the permanent atoms being passed from father to child, and so linking the kârmic heredity of the individual as individual with that of a specific line of heredity in any one life.

We thus depend in no merely figurative sense upon the experiences of the race of which we are a product. The permanent atom is no trifling granule of infinitesimal dimension, but rather a Cosmos within each body of the contributed tendencies of mankind. It is the memory of thoughts, feelings, emotions, acts, transmuted into vibrational capacities. Now it is impossible to have a vast accumulation of stored tendencies to respond to original stimuli without the need arising for the repetition of the stimulus, either original or similar. The law of all vibration is its tendency to repeat itself when occasion presents. Nature's principle is the ultimate satisfaction of tendency, because tendency is the great attractive force which eventually compels its own satisfaction. By this I do not mean that what may be done *must* be done. Tendencies are not all of one plane, and an incessant interaction of vibrations from the permanent atoms of the various bodies results in general modification. It is, nevertheless, a universal law that a tendency

to vibrational response of any kind is ultimately provided for. This explains above any other reason the need for reincarnation. The physical permanent atom, with its store of countless physical vibrations, must provide for these an adequate and appropriate stimulus. That stimulus can only be provided on the physical plane, for unto the physical the things of the physical. No other vibration will awaken response.

The Life-fruitage

Now this store of tendency in innumerable directions and on various planes, impressed on the living, sensitive substance of the permanent atom, is what I have referred to in this paper as the fruitage of a life. This fruitage, I repeat, is what comes over from birth to birth. It is the product of a life ; and the product of all the lives in a cycle will be the new man who has been made of the twin Monad of Life and Form.

We have tried to see something of the method of this wonderful garnering ; the marvellous continuity of experience in the midst of the ceaseless passing of form and body ; how the same form comes never again, though its nucleus is imperishable ; how that nucleus builds and rebuilds for no other reason than the satisfaction of its stored

tendencies to respond to original stimuli. The garnering process, like every other element in this ordered universe, is twofold. Energy is stored by experience, that it may grow by being used. Energy that is only absorbed into the permanent atom is useless as a permanent factor in the fruitage ; *it must* recreate itself *by further output.* So activities of whatever kind initiated from without, become, when sufficiently repeated, powers that stir from within, and *demand re-expression on the respective planes to which they belong.* A certain transmutation of energy takes place at death, I believe, which enriches and strengthens all the bodies ; there is withdrawal and mergence into the succeeding sheath which justifies my earlier statement of the imperishability even of form. Transmutation of the physical into the astral atom does, I think, occur even at our present stage, to a considerable extent, and may even justify the belief of certain schools in an ultimate passing from body to body which shall not be death, but transfiguration. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed," is one of the possibilities which the future may hold for us.

The Method of Monadic Evolution

The method, then, by which the Monad becomes what it is in essential nature is the method of stored

tendencies—fruitage garnered by a series of permanent centres. That all the garnerings of life should persist is imperative when we realise that out of such fruitage is to be born He whom the Christian Mystics term the Son, who shall repeat in a succeeding universe the work of the Monad, universal and individual, in the universe that now is. We are the Monad in temporary association with his fruitage, which is his acquired, in distinction to his essential, self. We seem to appropriate, and to identify ourselves with, these gleanings in the fields of time, of which we truly say we are the gleaner. And yet there is that in us which does not strictly glean, but standing apart, beyond the crush of spatial limits, controls and oversees the whole by the ceaseless outpouring of the initiating will.

To sum up, the Monad, through his permanent atoms, is ever making contacts with the Universe on all its levels, retaining in them the vibrations of world-experience, and re-creating by them new forms after that experience has been assimilated. This process is continuous on all the planes, and being one of the great rhythms of Nature, follows a regular and orderly sequence, which ceases only with the cessation or alteration of the rhythm. Sequence, of course, implies a time-element, but

the Monad, through his permanent atoms, is creating the time-element ; it is part of the great *Entsagung*.

Thus Reincarnation is the term applied only to the last and outermost expression of a continuous process of putting-forth of the powers of the spiritual Self through form-centres on all the great levels of the five-fold Universe. It is another way of saying that the Self is perpetually active throughout a life-cycle which is conterminous with that of the Universe ; and that the last and lowest of the form it uses is the physical body—the one of all others which is most subject to the limitations of time, and in which the rhythm of periodicity is most apparent.

Thus the Self does not reincarnate, because its incarnations, or, more accurately, its self-manifestations through form never cease. Neither do its forms reincarnate, for as forms they perish when their work in each specific life-cycle is done. Following the great Analogue with which we started, the Monad's ceaseless activity is undisturbed by the breaking up of forms. The Self does not come and go ; it is constant, stable, and changes not with the changing of bodies : forms alone are subject to periodicity, yet the same individual form is never again put forth.

The True Reincarnating Principle

But though forms are temporal, Form is eternal, and in forms the fruitage-bearing permanent atom—storehouse of the acquired tendencies of lives—sounds out the recalling note. For the permanent atom retains the past as vibratory powers whose recurring rhythm is the real and determining element in the renewal of forms. Fruitage alone, stored in an appropriate vehicle, is the reincarnating principle in man.

So we come again and again ; and yet we come not, for we are new every moment, passing ever on into the fulness of the Monadic life and leaving our deeds to flower in the fields in which they were sown.

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